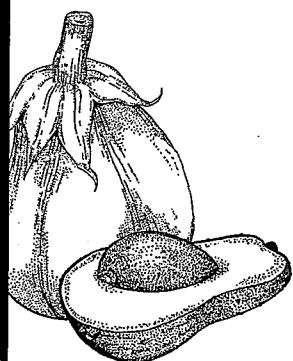
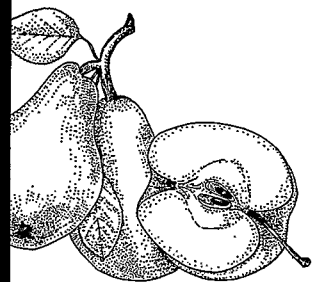




Donating Surplus Food to the Needy



or restaurants, hotels, and companies with foodservice operations, donating surplus food to the needy can be a great way to make use of excess food. Several WasteWi\$e partners have begun to donate their excess food as part of their waste reduction programs. Establishing a food donation program can serve as a partner's waste prevention goal. Beyond the environmental and cost savings benefits of food donations, your company will have the satisfaction of knowing you have helped feed someone who otherwise might have gone hungry.

There are two kinds of food donation programs that provide food to the needy.

Traditional food banks focus primarily on distributing large volumes of non-perishable food that is generally dried, canned, or prepackaged.

Prepared and Perishable Food Programs (PPFPs) — also called food recovery programs or surplus food distribution programs) redistribute small volumes of freshly prepared foods and perishables.

Traditional food banks generally work with the food industry to distribute surplus food inventories

or with institutions that hold "food drives" for the needy. Companies with excess non-perishable food may wish to contact a food bank for distribution. In the past decade, PPFPs have become an increasingly common way for companies, restaurants, hotels, institutions, and others to donate surplus food to the needy. This tip sheet focuses on donating food through PPFPs.

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Food Program Services

Most PPFPs offer the following services. Check with your local program for the details of what they offer.

Free pick-up. Most food programs have a pick-up schedule, which takes into account the donor's schedule and pick-up preferences. Food programs generally will pick up food on a daily, weekly, or on-call basis.

Trained food handlers. Employees and volunteers working for food programs are trained in sanitation, food inspection and sorting, and food handling by the local health department and will come equipped to inspect food for safe transport to the receiving agency.

Publicity. Many food service programs will publicize their donors to acknowledge their support. Some food donation organizations provide donors with a sticker, certificate, or other material to help alert customers of the company's participation. Others seek media coverage to help recognize their donors.

Donor Responsibilities

Food recovery programs only accept unserved food that can be safely transported and reused. If you are planning to make a donation to a PPFP, you should:

- Ensure that the food is within the expiration date
- Keep food at a safe temperature (below 40 or above 140 degrees)
- Check the food for signs of spoilage

Most food programs strictly limit the kinds of food they will accept; for instance, some will not accept mayonnaise salads and raw meat because of the high risk of spoilage. Food recovery programs often ask donors to store food awaiting pick-up in reusable airtight containers, which the program usually provides. Food recovery programs also strongly recommend that you cool down and refrigerate or freeze any heated leftovers to be picked up late in the day or the next morning. It is important to ensure that food is not left in the temperature "danger zone" (between 40° and 140°) for more than two hours.

Common Concerns

Am I liable for damages if the food spoils or causes injury, even if I have stored it properly?

To protect food donors, all fifty states and the District of Columbia have enacted "Good Samaritan" laws that specifically address food donations. While the language of these laws varies from state to state, most good samaritan food distribution laws extend some level of protection from liability unless there is evidence of "negligence," "recklessness" or "intentional misconduct" on the part of the donor. Many food rescue programs will provide you with a letter of indemnification or a "hold harmless" letter that outlines your liability as a donor.

Will I need to provide my employees with special training to prepare food for donation?

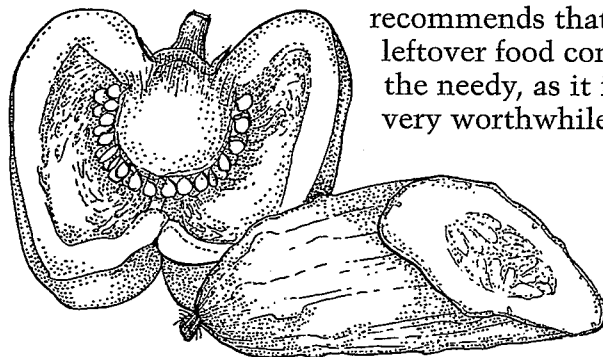
Since your kitchen or cafeteria staff should already be knowledgeable about safe food handling practices, additional training will most likely be unnecessary. In addition, food recovery program staff are trained in proper food handling, sorting, and transportation.

Will preparing food for donation require extra time?

Many companies that participate in prepared/perishable food donation programs say that little additional time or help is needed to prepare food for donation — employees simply perform a different task.

Hallmark: A Food Donation Success Story

According to Sally Luck, Manager of Corporate Services at Hallmark, a WasteWi\$e partner in Kansas City, MO, donating surplus food to the needy is a wonderful way to reduce waste. Hallmark, whose cafeteria serves 8,000 employees daily, has been donating surplus cafeteria food for more than five years. The company currently gives 20,000 pounds of perishable food to Kansas City Harvest, a local branch of Foodchain (a national program described below), each year. Starting the donation program at Hallmark was very simple. An internal team developed specific guidelines for cafeteria employees so they would know exactly how to store excess food. While it took a little time to change employees' habits of discarding surplus food to storing it properly, Hallmark's employees were very anxious to do something good for their community. Management had some initial concerns about liability, but after some investigation managers developed a high level of confidence in the local food program. Hallmark now believes that the capacity to perform a public service through donation far outweighs any risk of litigation. The program has been extremely successful at Hallmark and has a positive impact on both employee morale and the company's public relations. According to Luck, "Food recovery programs are the answer to the corporate foodservice operator's dilemma of what to do with wholesome excess food."



Coca-Cola: Putting Food on Atlanta's Table

WasteWi\$e Charter partner Coca-Cola's headquarters has been donating its surplus food to Atlanta's Table, a local branch of Foodchain, since 1987. According to Franz Halascheck, Coca-Cola's liaison for Atlanta's Table, donating excess food has been an entirely positive experience for the company. "Coca-Cola's employees are aware of the many homeless and hungry people in Atlanta and are happy to be able to help." Furthermore, the company does not want to see good food go to waste. Staff from Atlanta's Table provide Coca-Cola with storage containers which are retrieved once a week. Cafeteria employees simply separate the food for donation and then label and date the storage containers and freeze or refrigerate them until pick-up day—no extra time or training is necessary. All excess food from Coke's cafeteria, which serves 4,000 employees, as well as leftovers from banquets and other special events, is donated to the needy, diverting an average of 200 pounds per week from landfills. Halascheck cites concerns over liability as a stumbling block that many companies face when considering a donation program for prepared and perishable food, and reminds others that good samaritan laws are in place to protect donors. In addition, he strongly recommends that any company with leftover food consider donating it to the needy, as it is easy to do and very worthwhile.

Resources

Laws governing food donations, as well as procedures of local food recovery programs, will vary from community to community. If you are interested in donating your company's excess food, you can obtain more detailed information from the following national resources:

- **Foodchain** — a network of prepared and perishable food rescue programs throughout the U.S. and Canada. Provides listings of local organizations that accept donations and distribute them to those in need. 1-800-845-3008
- **Second Harvest** — operates a national network of local food banks, working mainly with the food industry to distribute surplus food inventories.

Provides a nationwide listing of food programs. 1-800-532-FOOD

- **Share Our Strength** — provides information on local and state good samaritan laws as well as referrals to local groups that can utilize food donations. 1-800-969-4767

For further information, you may also wish to contact organizations in your community, such as:

- State and local government offices involved in social service, social welfare, and health programs
- Your local chapter of the United Way
- Local charitable organizations

This tipsheet was developed by WasteWi\$e, EPA's voluntary program which assists businesses in taking cost-effective actions to reduce solid waste, through waste prevention, recycling, and buying recycled products.